

The Medical Association for Prevention of War (MAPW) is an Australian organisation that works to promote peace and disarmament. MAPW is the Australian affiliate of International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War (IPPNW). The following submission is on behalf of the Northern Territory branch of MAPW.

The Parliamentary Inquiry into Nuclear Non- proliferation and Disarmament is a welcome and long overdue forum. Nuclear non- proliferation and disarmament are issues in which there is no distinction between national and global interests. The social, health and environmental consequences of not pursuing nuclear disarmament are both potentially devastating and indiscriminate. Nuclear weapons remain the strategic cornerstone of a number of nations, and their allies. The mere possession of nuclear weapons, by any state or group, implies a potential intention to use. This is not acceptable. The Parliamentary Inquiry must be a vehicle that conveys, without exception, that nuclear weapons are unacceptable. The Inquiry must examine ways in which Australia can take initiative, and contribute to global nuclear disarmament. This includes developing and participating in international multilateral relationships, stressing the importance of existing treaties, and examining how domestic activities can contribute to maintaining the global nuclear arsenal. The Inquiry must provide the offer of hope for a nuclear free future.

Achieving non- proliferation and nuclear disarmament will be a complex and ongoing process. The Parliamentary Inquiry needs to consider a range of means of attaining this goal. Specific measures include:

1. Affirmation that nuclear weapons pose such a significant threat to global security, to render their existence unacceptable. This affirmation must extend to nuclear weapon associated research and development, technologies, delivery systems and industries.
2. Recognition that the unacceptable nature of nuclear weapons must clearly and strongly be expressed to all nations who possess nuclear weapons, and those countries that rely on strategic alliances with nuclear weapons possessing nations.
3. That the Australian Government support and participate in the development of a Nuclear Weapons Convention (NWC). The basis of a NWC is an international multilateral treaty to ban nuclear weapons and ensure the decommissioning and elimination of current stockpiles. The development of a NWC is consistent with the current governments policy toward non- proliferation and disarmament, considering Prime Minister Rudd's plan for an International Commission on Nuclear Non- Proliferation and Disarmament- announced in 2008.
4. That a NWC must prohibit the development, testing, production, stockpiling, transfer, use and threat of use of nuclear weapons. A NWC must prohibit the production of fissile material suitable for making nuclear weapons. A key point in any proposed NWC would be that nuclear weapon possessing states decommission and eliminate their current nuclear weapons stockpiles.
5. That prior to the development of a NWC, the Australian Government advocate the importance of existing treaties as a means of pursuing non- proliferation and disarmament. Existing treaties of particular importance include the Non- Proliferation Treaty (notably Article VI), the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, and the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty.
6. That the Australian government evaluate the risks and benefits of domestic practises and institutions that may, directly or indirectly, contribute to maintenance of the global nuclear weapons arsenal. Article III of the South Pacific Nuclear Free Treaty states that parties may 'not to take any action to assist or encourage the manufacture or acquisition of any nuclear explosive device by any State'. Australia's uranium mining industry, and the ongoing research and development of laser enrichment technology at the ANSTO Lucas Height facility, are two examples that need to be taken into account. Uranium mining can not be divorced from providing the raw materials for nuclear weapons, nor can nuclear energy industry technology from nuclear weapons technology.
7. That the Australian government declare that Australia, and its territorial responsibilities, to be nuclear weapons free zones. Article VII of the NPT affirms the right of countries to establish nuclear free zones. This declaration must apply to all vessels that use Australian territorial waters, dock in Australian ports and to aircraft that fly in Australian territorial airspace. These actions are consistent with the intentions expressed in the preamble of the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty- 'Believing that regional arms control measures can contribute to global efforts to reverse the nuclear arms race'.

The goal of the Parliamentary Inquiry into Nuclear Non- Proliferation and Disarmament must be as its name suggests. Non- proliferation and disarmament can only be achieved with the co- ordination of intention and effort, of the international community. Australia can be a conduit for this co- ordination. The Inquiry provides a real opportunity for Australia to provide a meaningful contribution to nuclear disarmament. The Parliamentary Inquiry, the Australian government and the broader Australian community must acknowledge that Australian resources and technology can be used in the research, development and production of nuclear weapons. The intention to work toward disarmament, within an international frame work, must be matched by domestic actions that demonstrate this intent. The Inquiry must consider actions that may be considered difficult or confronting by sections of the Australian community. These must be approached earnestly and with responsibility. Through the consideration of nuclear disarmament and how it might be obtained, the Inquiry provides national and international hope for a nuclear weapon free future.

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On behalf of:

Northern Territory Branch

Medical Association for the Prevention of War.